

Message Text

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SUBJECT: PROSPECTS FOR GENERAL STRIKE JAN 23-24

REF: (A) 77 LIMA 11065 (B) LIMA 0424

SUMMARY: THE MOSCOW-LINE COMMUNIST LABOR/CGTP) HAS REAFFIRMED PUBLICLY ITS INTENTION TO CARRY OUT A GENERAL STRIKE JAN 23-24 OSTENSIBLY TO PROTEST GOP AUSTERITY MEASURES AND THE PLIGHT OF UNION LEADERS AND WORKERS FIRED FOR STRIKE ACTIVITIES LAST YEAR. MORE POLITICAL THAN ECONOMIC, AND RELATED IN PART TO THE CGTP'S CURRENT DISPUTE WITH THE INCUMBENT COMMUNIST PARTY LEADERSHIP, THE STRIKE HAS ASSUMED INCREASING IMPORTANCE AS A TEST OF WILLS BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND A SEGMENT OF THE PERUVIAN LEFT. ALTHOUGH THE STRIKE IS EXPECTED TO DISTURB THE COUNTRY'S ROUTINE, THE EMBASSY DOUBTS THAT CGTP WIL DUPLICATE THE PARALYZATION PRODUCTED JULY 19, 1977. END SUMMARY.

1. THE CGTP APPEARS COMMITTED TO GOING THROUGH WITH A STRIKE EFFORT NEXT WEEK DESPITE SEVERE WARNINGS FROM GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP AND PRESS AND THE REJECTION OF THE STRIKE CALL BY OTHER LABOR CONFEDERATIONS AND MOST INDEPENDENT UNIONS. THE APRA RELATED CONFEDERATION, CTP, AND INDEPENDENT UNIONS DOMINATED BY APRISTAS HAVE CONDEMNED THE STRIKE AND WILL URGE THEIR MEMBERS TO SHOW UP FOR WORK MONDAY (JAN 23). INCOUDED IN THIS GROUP

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WHICH PROBABLY EQUALS OR SURPASSES THE NUMBERS OF THE CGTP, ARE THE INDEPENDENT MARTITIME WORKERS AND SEVERAL TRANSPORATION UNIONS (BUSES, TRUCKS AND TAXIS). MUNCIPAL BUS DRIVERS REPORTEDLY WILL ALSO BE ON THE JOB. AN IMPORTANT UNION OF TRANSPORT WORKERS IN LIMA IS HEADED BY MOSCOW-LINE COMMUNIST JUAN LUNA. HOWEVER, HIS UNION IS AFFILIATED TO THE GOVERNMENT CREATED CONFEDERATION, THE CTRP, WHICH HAS FORMALLY DENOUNCED THE STRIKE. THE PUBLIC

SERVICE TRANSPORT FEDERATION AFFILIATED TO CGTP REPORTEDLY HAS AGREED WITH GOP OFFICIALS NOT RPT NOT TO TAKE PART IN THE STRIKE. THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT CONFEDERATION, CNT, IS DIVIDED BUT THE MAJORITY WING UNDER VICTOR SANCHEZ ZAPATA SEEMS UNLIKELY TO SUPPORT THE COMMUNIST PROTESTS, IN CONTRAST TO ITS POSITION LAST JULY.

2. THE BANKWORKERS FEDERATION HEADED BY EDURADO CASTILLO FORMALLY SUPPORTS THE STRIKE. CASTILLO IS ONE OF THE 60 BANKWORKER LEADERS FIRED FOR LAST JULY'S ACTIVITIES WHOM THE GOVERNMENT HAS REFUSED TO ORDER RETURNED TO THEIR JOBS. HOWEVER, MANY OTHER BANKWORKER LEADERS HAVE BEEN RETURNED TO THEIR JOBS AFTER THE INTERVENTION OF PRESIDENT MORALES BERMUDEZ 77 (LIMA 11065) IT IS NOT CLEAR HOW MANY OF THE BANKWORKERS WILL OBEY THEIR LEADERS ON THIS OCCASION. APRA STILL RETAINS SUPPORT INSIDE THE COMMUNIST DOMINATED FEDERATION AND THE APRISTAS REPORTEDLY ARE TRYING TO MOUNT OPPOSITION TO THE STRIKE. MANY OTHER UNIONS AFFILIATED WITH CGTP ARE NONCOMMUNIST AND MORE OR LESS APOLITICAL. THESE GROUPS MAY WELL GO TO WORK THE 23RD IF THEY CONSIDER IT SAFE TO DO SO OR IF RANK-AND-FILE RESENTMENT AT THE GOP AUSTERITY MEASURES IS NO MORE PRONOUNCED THAN IT NOW APPEARS TO BE. AN IMPORTANT SOURCE OF CGTP SUPPORT IS THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY HARD HIT BY UNEMPLOYMENT. CGTP CONTENTS WITH APRA-RELATED UNIONS FOR POWER IN THE INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL SECTORS AND WITH CTRP AFFILIATES IN THE PUBLIC SERVICES.

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3. ALONG WITH THE ROLE OF THE TRANSPORT WORKERS, THE ATTITUDE AND ACTIONS OF THE GOP WILL BE CENTRAL IN PREVENTING THE STRIKE'S SUCCESS. MINISTER OF INTERIOR LUIS CISNEROS VIZQUERRA HAS WARNED CGTP LEADERS THAT THEY WILL BE HELD PERSONALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE JAN 23 EVENTS AND DAO HAS INFORMATION FROM A RELIABLE SOURCE THAT GOP PLANS AND MAY NOW BE MAKING PREEMPTIVE ARRESTS. AN ALARMING MILITARY TURNOUT TO GUARANTEE SAFETY FOR NONSTRIKING WORKERS AND TO DISPERSE CONCENTRATIONS THAT MIGHT BLOCK TRAFFIC OR THREATEN PUBLIC ORDER APPEARS ALMOST CERTAIN. PROVIDED THE GOP MAKES A SIZABLE SHOW OF FORCE, BUSES, TRUCKS AND TAXIS WILL PROBABLY RUN. MILITARY UNITS NEAR LIMA HAVE BEEN GEARING UP FOR AN EMERGENCY AND ANTICIPATE VIOLENCE. ACCORDING TO DAO, THE ARMED FORCES HOPE TO MINIMIZE VIOLENCE IN ORDER TO ESCAPE CRITICISM FOR VIOLATING HUMAN RIGHTS (SEE DAO IR 6876001078). ON THE OTHER HAND, THEY CONSIDER IT ESSENTIAL TO FRUSTRATE A SUCCESSFUL COMMUNIST DEMONSTRATION WHICH WOULD CALL INTO QUESTION THE GOVERNMENT'S ALREADY ERODED AUTHORITY.

4. THE PEKING-LINE MINeworkers FEDERATION (FTMP) TRADITIONALLY ACTS INDEPENDENTLY OF THE MOSCOW-ORIENTED CGTP. BARRING UNFORESEEN DEVELOPMENTS, SOUTHERN PERU COPPER COMPANY OFFICIALS

EXPECT NO REPAT NO PROBLEMS IN SPCC MINES NOR IN THE GOVERNMENT OWNED CENTROMIN COMPLEX. (SPCC'S TOQUEPALA MINE PUBLICLY REJECTED THE STRIKE CALL AND OTHER SPCC MINES APPEAR UNINTERESTED IN THE CGTP EFFORT. METALWORKERS AND SOME OF THE SMALLER MINES MAY GO OUT BUT THEIR EFFORTS WILL NOT BE ECOONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT NOR PARTICULARLY VISITBLE.

5. COMMENT. OBSERVERS WHO CONSIDER THE STRIKE UNLIKELY TO SUCCEED CONTRAST THE CURRENT SITUATION WITH THAT OF JULY. IN THE LATTER CASE, THREE OUT OF FOUR LABOR CONFEDERATIONS, THE CGTP, THE CTRP AND THE CNT HAD FORMED A SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO COORDINATE THE STRIKE WHILE THIS TIME THE CGTP IS GOING IT ALONE. A SERIES OF STRIKES OUTSIDE OF LIMA EARLIER IN JULY HAD INCREASED PUBLICITY AND SUPPORT FOR THE GENRAL STRIKE ON JULY 19. ADDITIONALLY, THE CONFIDENTIAL

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OSTENSIBLY PRO-GOVERNMENT PRESS HAD ACTUALLY GIVEN "FAVORABLE" PUBLICITY TO THE STRIKE IN CONTRAST TO THE CONDEMNATORY EDITORIALS IN TV, NEWSPAPERS AND RADIO THAT THE GOP HAS MOUNTED DURING THE PAST TWO WEEKS. SCHOOL VACATIONS LESSEN THE LIKELIHOOD OF UNIVERSITY PARTICIPATION OR EFFECTIVE ACTION BY ULTRA-LEFT PRIMARY AND SECONDARY TEACHERS GROUP, SUTEP. FACTORS FAVORING THE CGTP'S CHANGES OF A SUCCESSFUL STRIKE ARE RESENTMENT AT THE PRESSURES OF INFLATION AND DECLING REAL WAGES (ALTHOUGH SOME OBSERVERS CONSIDER THIS MUTED IN COMPARISON TO LAST JULY), THE "MARTYRS" PROVIDED BY THE DEATHS DURING THE RECENT DEMONSTRATION AT CHIMBOTE (LIMA 0424 SYMPATHY AND SOLIDARITY OF THE LEFTIST POLITICAL GROPS AND THE BANK WORKERS' PARFICIPATION WHICH COULD HINDER BUSINESS OPERATIONS, ESPECIALLY IF THE STRIKE GOES ON THE SECOND DAY. THE CGTP CLAIMS 450,000 MEMBERS AND MAY HAVE 300,000. NONETHELESS, MUCH OF CGTP'S GROWTH IS MORE ATTRIBUTABEL TO OPPORTUNISM THAN CONVICTION SINCE UNDER THE VELASCO REGIME CGTP AFFILIATION WAS REWARDED BY GOVERNMENT FAVORS. UNEXPECTED EVENTS OF COURSE COULD ALTER DRAMATICALLY THE LIKELIHOOD OF CGTP'S DUPLICATING THE IMPRESSIVE "SUCCESS" OF JULY 19. HOWEVER, STRONGER AND COORDINATED GOP OPPOSITION INCLUDING PREEMPTIVE ARRESTS, A SHOW OF FORCE ASSURING SAFETY FOR NONSTRIKES, AND THE LIKELIHOOD THAT TRANSPORT WORKERS WILL NOTTTAKE PART IN THE PROTEST, REDUCE THE CHANCES FOR AN EFFECTIVE AHD HIGHLY VISIBEL PARALYSIS AS ACHIEVED LAST JULY. NEVERTHELESS, IT IS CLEAR THAT THE GOP IS "RUNNING SCARED" ON THIS ISSUE.

6. GOP DIRECTOR OF STATE SECUIRYT (PIP) TOLD EMBASSY OFFICER EARLY JANUARY 19 THAT PRESIDENT MORALES BERMUDEZ WAS MEETING CGTP LEADERS LATER TODAY TO DISCUSS THEIR DEMANDS -- ESPECIALLY REHIRDING OF FIRED CONFIDENTIAL

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COMMUNIST LEADERS. MORALES BERMUDEZ WOULD APPARENTLY
LIKE TO MAKE SIGNIFICANT CONCESSIONS -- EVEN TO GIVE
A GENRAL AMNESTY AS HE INDICATED IN HIS DECEMBER 30
REMAKRS. BUT SO FAR THE KEY MILITARY, AND PRITICULARLY
INTERIOR MINSTER CISNEROS, HAVE OPPOSED SUCH A MOVE.
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